

**ON
TRACK
OFF
ROAD**





A 100% MOMENT

LANCE
KOBUSCH
MONSTER CUP SUPERMINI WINNER

The Racecraft "Solar"





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Photo: Jeff Kardas



AMA-MX

Flying again...

The final of the Red Bull Straight Rhythm and victory at the Monster Energy Cup; almost an energy drink clean sweep for Ken Roczen who also stars at the top of the new Moto 7 film. The German is setting up 2016 nicely after a rough and controversial end to the 2015 campaign. Question marks remain over the 21 year old's credentials for the top prize in Supercross but he is still ridiculously young. An early bet for A1 success anyone?

Photo by Simon Cudby









MotoGP

How close...?

What more can be said about Sepang? Read on for two engrossing perspectives from David Emmett and Matthew Roberts – two people who have been right in the thick of MotoGP for a number of years. Valencia is now utterly unmissable

Photo by yamahamotogp.com



**MX**

No way to treat a champ...

After battles at Glen Helen and the Motocross of Nations Cooper Webb was finally able to bag a higher step on the podium than MXGP World Champion Romain Febvre at the star-graced final round of the All-Japan Championship at Sugo. The American was second to the Frenchman's third (Febvre was punted off his Yamaha at the start of the first moto as seen here) as Trey Canard ran out as winner

Photo by Taku-san Nagami







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MotoGP

SHELL MALAYSIA MOTORCYCLE

SEPANG · OCTOBER 25th · Rnd 17 of 18

MotoGP winner: Dani Pedrosa, Honda

Moto2 winner: Johann Zarco, Kalex

Moto3 winner: Miguel Oliveira, KTM



FEEL SOME SYMPATHY FOR DANI PEDROSA. THIS WAS A SUPERB SECOND WIN IN THREE EVENTS AND JUST A FIFTH PODIUM APPEARANCE OF THE SEASON BUT IT WAS OVERSHADOWED BY WHAT HAPPENED BEHIND HIM. THE BELL RANG FOR ROSSI VS MARQUEZ, LORENZO DIDN'T SEE YELLOW BUT MAYBE RED ON THE PODIUM (AND NOT MUCH AT ALL IN FACT AS HE CLAIMS) AND A QUESTIONABLE SANCTION DEPENDING ON WHO YOU TALK TO. 7 POINTS, GRID POSITIONS AND PLENTY OF ANIMOSITY...SEPANG HAS TEED UP VALENCIA TO BE SOMETHING SPECIAL

YCLE GRAND PRIX

MotoGP MAL

WITHOUT WORDS

Blogs by David Emmett & Matthew Roberts. Photos by Repsol Honda,
www.yamahamotogp.com, Ducati Corse Press,
Milagro, Monster Energy, Gold and Goose
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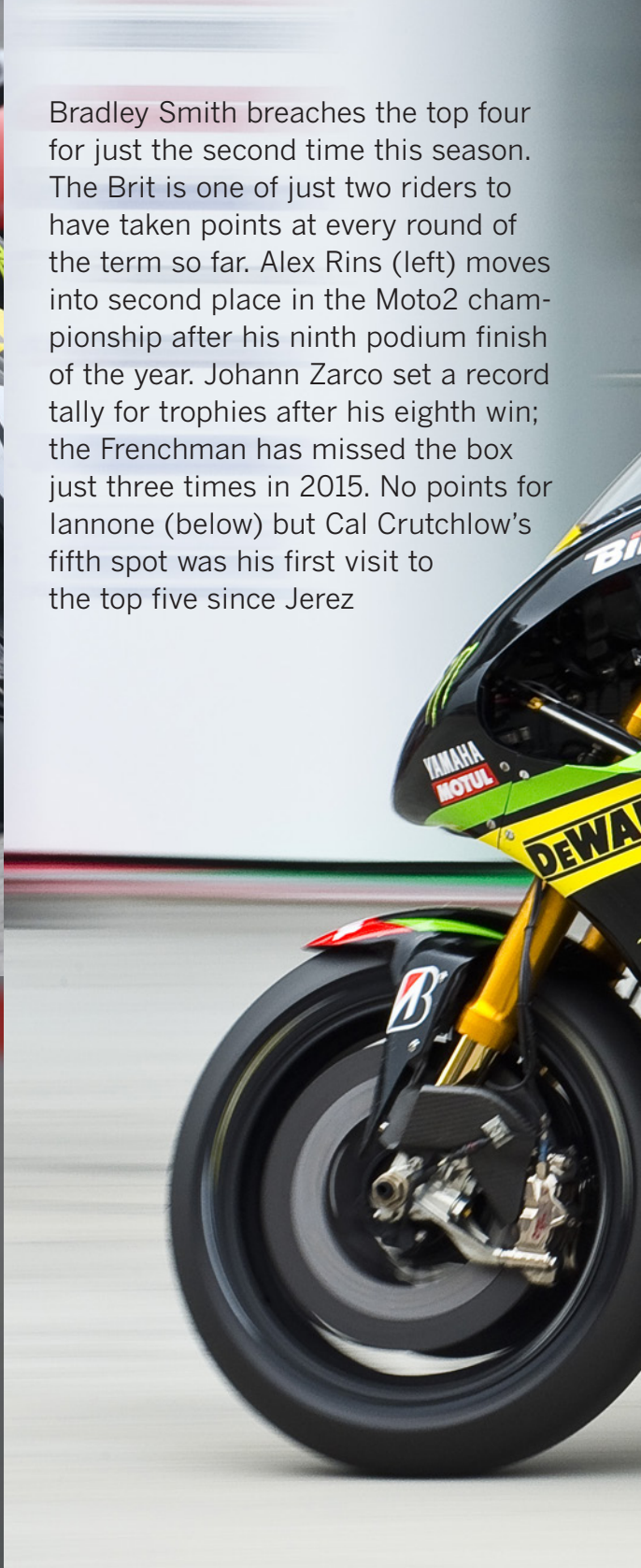




Meanwhile in other classes...
KTM's gains for the second half of 2015 have shown strongly and Miguel Oliveira clinched his fifth podium in a row and third win from that batch to make Danny Kent wait another two weeks to finally end Great Britain's championship drought

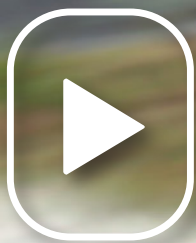


Bradley Smith breaches the top four for just the second time this season. The Brit is one of just two riders to have taken points at every round of the term so far. Alex Rins (left) moves into second place in the Moto2 championship after his ninth podium finish of the year. Johann Zarco set a record tally for trophies after his eighth win; the Frenchman has missed the box just three times in 2015. No points for Iannone (below) but Cal Crutchlow's fifth spot was his first visit to the top five since Jerez





If there was ever a shot that summed up the outgoing world champion's style. Of the Sepang incident '93' said: "Both what Valentino said to Race Direction and what he did on the track has made me disappointed. I've never seen anything like it: a rider kicking another rider. It might be down to nerves, but I want to try to forget about all this and the important thing is that I'm fine physically. I hope, for the sake of the sport that this ends here."



PLAY





SOURING THE COMEBACK?

By Matthew Roberts

As knee-jerk reactions to a knee-jerk incident go they don't come any more impulsive than the flurry of opinion that followed Sunday's moment of MotoGP madness in Malaysia. Social media was awash with conjecture from both sides of a Rossi-Marquez fan divide that hadn't existed before Thursday's bizarre press conference and even the most experienced paddock insiders struggled to believe what they were seeing, let alone describe it.

"That wasn't the hand of God, it was the knee of the GOAT!" exclaimed BT Sport's lead MotoGP commentator Keith Huewen, who rapidly jumped to a series of conclusions with each replay of the incident as he settled on Rossi as the aggressor (the 'Hand of God' reference, for non-soccer fans, is to Diego Maradona, who deliberately used his hand to score an illegal goal against England in the 1986 World Cup).

"I'm afraid I'm very sorry, and I am a Valentino Rossi fan through and through, but that was not good riding," concluded Huewen as Marquez returned to the pits. "That was a personal swipe at the soon to be ex-World Champion."

Keith's opinion was echoed by his colleagues Neil Hodgson and James Toseland, who agreed with the notion that Rossi was punishable. All three of those guys have raced Grand Prix motorcycles and therefore automatically have a viewpoint that is 100% more valid than those of us who haven't. However, I do wonder now that the dust has settled and with the benefit of hindsight, whether they all stand by their initial call.

Looking at the social media streams of other current and ex-professional riders over the past couple of days there certainly seems to have been a growing swell of support for Rossi since Sunday, but whether you wear yellow-tinted glasses or not, it is clear that nobody came away from Sepang with much credit. If there is one over-

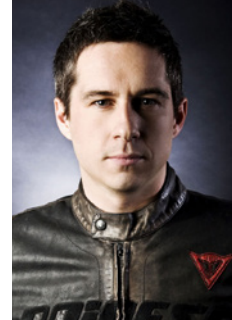
riding emotion I have felt since the race, it is disappointment that, regardless of blame, Rossi allowed himself to get embroiled in a situation that has thrown into jeopardy one of THE greatest sporting comebacks of all time.

Because whether you like him or not, what the 36-year-old was on the verge of achieving before his Malaysian meltdown is a precious rarity in the history of sport. In 1970 Muhammad Ali, stripped of his titles and forced out of the sport of boxing after refusing the draft for the Vietnam War, returned to the ring and reclaimed the heavyweight championship from George Foreman at the Rumble in the Jungle.

Niki Lauda retired from Formula 1 in 1979, two years after winning the title for Ferrari, but three years later he answered a call from Ron Dennis at McLaren and came back to eventually win another title in 1984. Michael Jordan left the Chicago Bulls in 1993 and dabbled with baseball but came back to win three straight NBA titles between 1996 and 1998.

Okay, Valentino never actually retired from racing, although for the sake of those two dreadful seasons he spent with Ducati he might as well have done. To win an eighth MotoGP World Championship, six years on from his last, would put the shine on a legacy that only a handful of sporting greats can boast.

The achievements of this golden few are particularly remarkable because inevitably from time to time each sport sees a changing of the guard, as a new master takes on current best practice, improves on it and establishes a new gold standard. For those athletes in the latter stages of their careers, with their own techniques and instinct imprinted on their brains over years and years of repetition, it is nigh on impossible to fight the tide. In short, you can't teach an old dog new tricks.



This year Rossi has not necessarily learned new tricks but he has gleaned the absolute maximum from his old ones. Combined with a series of misfortunes for his rivals (some of which he believes they hold him accountable for) and an unusual proliferation of freakish race-day weather, his consistency and determination has allowed him to establish a lead in the championship that he has somehow clung on to against the odds.

Two years ago the sport's youngest ever World Champion raised the bar to new heights and today Marc Marquez is capable of feats on a MotoGP bike that nobody else can copy - not Rossi, not even Jorge Lorenzo. In theory he should be unbeatable, but he is young and he remains flawed. This season his natural impetuosity on the bike, the very thing that sets him apart, has been his downfall on a package that didn't allow room for error.

At the same time, Lorenzo is combining the skills that once revolutionised MotoGP best practice with the experience he has acquired since then to make him the most complete rider on the current grid. Should he go on to win this title at Valencia, it will be fully deserved.

There is, of course, one thing in his way; a romantic quest for the ages that does not deserve to be tainted by an unnecessary and unsavoury episode. Should it follow its unlikely path, this epic story could have one final twist.

If it does, it could still be the greatest ever told.



An engaging battle of the Suzukis and the Catalans for seventh place was won by Aleix Espargaro by less than two tenths of a second



CLASSIFICATION & CHAMPIONSHIP

MotoGP RESULT

Riders

1	Dani Pedrosa, SPA	Honda
2	Jorge Lorenzo, SPA	Yamaha
3	Valentino Rossi, ITA	Yamaha
4	Bradley Smith, GBR	Yamaha
5	Cal Crutchlow, GBR	Honda

MotoGP CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER 17 of 18 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Valentino Rossi	312
2 Jorge Lorenzo	305
3 Marc Marquez	222
4 Dani Pedrosa	190
5 Andrea Iannone	188

Moto2 RESULT

Riders

1	Johann Zarco, FRA	Kalex
2	Thomas Luthi, SUI	Kalex
3	Jonas Folger, GER	Kalex
4	Takaai Nakagami, JPN	Kalex
5	Lorenzo Baldassarri, ITA	Kalex

Moto2 CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER 17 of 18 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Johann Zarco (c)	343
2 Alex Rins	214
3 Tito Rabat	206
4 Sam Lowes	175
5 Thomas Luthi	163



Moto3 RESULT

Riders

1	Miguel Oliveira, POR	KTM
2	Brad Binder, RSA	KTM
3	Jorge Navarro, SPA	Honda
4	Niccolò Antonelli, ITA	Honda
5	Romano Fenati, ITA	KTM

Moto3 CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER 17 of 18 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Danny Kent	253
2 Miguel Oliveira	229
3 Enea Bastianini	196
4 Romano Fenati	176
5 Niccolò Antonelli	174

THE WAY TO PLAY...

By David Emmett

Sepang will be remembered as a black day in the history of MotoGP. There was a lot of ugliness all weekend in the clash at Sepang, capped by the behaviour of Valentino Rossi and Marc Márquez during the race, ultimately leading to Rossi causing Márquez to crash. Not that Márquez didn't deserve it, but for Rossi to take his eyes off the championship and get involved in a personal vendetta from which no winners could emerge was surprisingly foolish. Rossi was edging closer to taking his tenth title, and could have gone to Valencia holding a match ball. But he threw it all away in a moment of madness, born of sheer frustration.

An even less appetizing picture emerges of Marc Márquez. The Spaniard took affront at the accusations Rossi made that he was working to help Lorenzo beat the Italian in the championship, and had held Rossi up at Phillip Island. Whether those accusations had any basis in fact or not – my analysis says they do not, but it is really hard to tell – the fact is that Márquez decided to fight harder against Rossi at Sepang than he had against any other rider, goading Rossi into lashing out, pushing him wide, and eventually causing him to crash.

In the press conference, Jorge Lorenzo added yet another bad taste in the mouth, spending his time complaining that Rossi had not been disqualified. He had a chance to walk away from this looking dignified, and still holding the strongest hand in the championship – Lorenzo is a rocket around Valencia, Rossi has never really got on with the track – but he instead, he managed to make himself look bitter and petty. Lorenzo may have a point when he says that the penalties handed out by Race Direction are inconsistent and can seem arbitrary, but he would have won a lot more fans if he had kept those thoughts to himself.

Which is very much the point. We idolize these riders. I became a Rossi fan watching him race in

125s and 250s, and was blown away by his debut in 500s. The more closely I followed Grand Prix racing, the greater my appreciation for all of the riders involved. Once I started writing about the sport for a living, that feeling grew even stronger. It is not that I stopped being a fan of Valentino Rossi, more that I also became a fan of Nicky Hayden, Casey Stoner, Jorge Lorenzo, Dani Pedrosa and everyone on the grid. As you get to know riders better on a personal level, you start to see the human underneath, and you may have more affinity for one rider than another, but the admiration for all of them remains. From MotoGP champion to last place on the Moto3 grid, every one of these riders is special.

But you also see the ugly side. The initial reaction to the incident on social media was one of an overwhelming sense that Marc Márquez' behaviour on track had been unfair, and unsportsmanlike. He had been doing everything in his power to hold Rossi up, and not race for a result. They were quite right, of course, that was exactly what Márquez was doing. The mistake is to think that elite athletes have any sense of sportsmanship or fair play. They are in this because they have an overwhelming urge to assert their dominance, to beat other people, to show that they are the best. Though they may mouth platitudes about fair play and may the best rider win, behind the scenes they will do whatever it takes to try to win. After each race, Race Direction receives a constant flow of angry riders and team managers demanding they do something about the disgraceful fact that other people finished ahead of them. Almost without exception, they are shown the door.

It is not surprising that the best riders in the world should also have a touch of the sociopath about them. They sacrifice so much in their lives and devote so much of their time to preparing themselves to win. They run or cycle, spend time in the gym, they ride, they starve themselves, they sleep, they miss parties, birthdays, an-



niversaries and the birth of their own children, all because they want to ride round a race track faster than anybody else. They live for victory, but more than that, they hate losing. Many are the tale of Monopoly pieces thrown out of windows when a rider finds he can't win at the board game.

So the clash between Rossi and Márquez may be massive news, but it is hardly unexpected, and it is nothing new. The incident is just one of a long chain of events in motorcycle racing history where riders have either lost their heads, or been riding not to win, but to obtain a result. Sometimes, not even a result that would benefit them personally.

There have been the clashes between protagonists fighting for the title. The most egregious of these came at the 250cc race in Argentina in 1998. Loris Capirossi led his Aprilia teammate Tetsuya Harada by just four points going into the final race. The two were battling for the lead on the final lap, Harada just out of reach of Capirossi as they approached the final turn. With five points the difference between a first and a second place, Capirossi could either accept his loss gratefully, and settle for second place in the race and in the championship, or play dirty and take Harada out. As long as Harada did not score any points, Capirossi would be champion. The Italian simply did not brake for the final corner, T-boning Harada and sending him flying. Capirossi remained upright, but lost just enough time for Valentino Rossi to get through to take the win. At first, Capirossi was awarded second place, and anointed champion. Then the race steward disqualified Capirossi, and took points off him, making Harada champion. Capirossi appealed that decision to the FIM, and months later, he was given back his second place and his 250cc title. He had been fired by Aprilia, but the title meant more to him than anything else. His ploy had been effective, but ugly.

The most mysterious was the battle for the 500cc title between Kenny Roberts and Freddie Spencer at Anderstorp in 1983. We are used to a full array of

cameras covering the circuit, but in the early eighties, TV coverage was restricted to a certain number of corners. What happened, we do not know for sure, and events vary depending on whom you talk to. Roberts was leading the race as they disappeared from sight around the back of the circuit, Spencer reappearing in the lead. Spencer had passed his fellow American at one of the most dangerous parts of the circuit. Spencer says he did so safely, merely putting a forceful pass on Roberts. Roberts claims Spencer pushed him off track, and nearly killed him. After the race and on the podium, Roberts kept up a tirade of abuse at Spencer for the pass. He retired at the end of the season, saying that he did not want to race against a man who was prepared to risk a fatal crash in the name of glory. Spencer would be crowned champion that year.

Living in Holland, the battle most often mentioned came at Phillip Island, in 1990. Loris Capirossi made an impressive debut in the 125cc class, winning three races and a total of eight podiums. The seventeen year old Italian came to Phillip Island leading Hans Spaan by two points, and needing to finish at least one place ahead of the Dutchman. The Dutchman was fast, but Capirossi had some help, and the massed ranks of Italian riders ganged up on Spaan to try to slow him up. Fausto Gresini, Dario Romboni and Bruno Casanova harassed Spaan throughout the race, cutting him up and slowing him down, and helping to protect Capirossi's lead. So frustrated did Spaan become at one point that he tried to punch Fausto Gresini, no mean feat on a 125 round Phillip Island. The Italians would prevail, Capirossi winning both the race and the title, Casanova and Romboni finishing ahead of Spaan. It was a classic case of unfair and dirty riding. But it worked.

There is an irony to these stories from the past. One of the men sitting in judgement on the clash between Valentino Rossi and Marc Márquez was Loris Capirossi. Nowadays, the man involved in so many questionable incidents of the past is a member of Race Direction in MotoGP.





KTM FREERIDE E-SM

KTM'S FREERIDE E-SM THROWS AWAY SOME OFF-ROAD DETAILS TO BECOME A SUPERB PLAYBIKE FOR THE CITY AND URBAN ROUTES. WE PLUGGED INTO THE CONCEPT AROUND THE 'CARRERS' OF BARCELONA AND ASKED KTM'S RELIABLE VOICE OF REASON AND PROMOTION, THOMAS KUTTRUF, WHY STREET ELECTRIC IS WORTH SOME WALLET-ABUSE

ELECTRIC AVENUE

By Adam Wheeler
Photos by Sebas Romero

Seventeen issues ago we hopped and wobbled around Saalbach summer slopes in Austria to try and offer some appraisal of KTM's ambitious Freeride electric concept off-roader; almost the perfect antidote to the emission problem associated with taking bikes into greenery. Almost a year on and with KTM tweaking the plug-in technology for the road we're turning heads again in Barcelona town centre. All the same feelings are there: a slim, light, nimble ride conveying almost a sense of bicycling, impressive power delivery from the 16km/22hp (running at 11kw/15hp mostly) that gets you away from any car at the lights, riding-for-dummies and the knowledge that worries over battery life can be cured by seeking out the nearest socket.

Aside from the utter ease of motoring around on the Freeride (I doubt a rider of any ability will ever find the limits and possibilities of a motorcycle quicker than with this model) that sensation I love most about the E-SM is that 'on-tap' feeling with the slightest turn of the throttle: instant torque and gratification and on streets where you would not want to be hitting silly speeds or gathering unnecessary attention.



KTM have a coy approach to their first electric street model. Homologation means that it will only hit certain markets and the price (topping 11,000 euros) will push it out of the realistic bounds of many, particularly as it will not function particularly well as a commuter (no storage and mileage limits) and will need more care than a majority of the crud-ridden scooters seen around the Catalan capital. For Supermoto fans it is the ultimate novelty. It could also appeal to first time riders in warmer climes that want a simple, traffic-busting solution. It could even be the exotic point of a new urban craze of stunt riding. In other words there is no clear or traditional market target for the E-SM, even if it is arguably the coolest looking battery-with-wheels. The off-road sister has obvious benefits but the street incarnation needs a relaxed play. "It was quite clear that we'd use the existing Freeride-E technology for street riding even though we knew the range of the hardware would be a limiting factor," admits Kuttruf. "It is still a great offering for a supermoto, sprint, urban bike with a lot of potential. We don't have clear indications when it comes to figures or a market but our evaluation right now is that roughly two-thirds of the overall Freeride E production would be dedicated to off-road and one third to Street, some 1500 motorcycles."

KTM FREERIDE E-SM



10

FEATURE



CLICK TO
BEHIND

KTM FREERIDE E-SM



THE LOGO TO READ ABOUT THE BUILD AND SPECS
AND KTM'S FREERIDE E TECHNOLOGY

FREERIDE 

How did you go about converting the E-XC and E-SX for road use and with what goal?

We feel the Freeride E-SM can be versatile. The spec system is almost identical to the E-XC but for a few adaptations for road usage. So the customer could adapt it back and forth with two sets of wheels. It can be taken into an off-road park or used on a daily basis thanks to the road homologation. The Pirellis are the biggest difference and then other small things like the shorter front fender and a slightly longer transmission. The E-XC has a top speed of around 75kmph and the SM goes easily at 90. Apart from that the spec is the same. Pollution and noise is a wide-ranging topic and not only something that affects off-road. I think it is a strong 'plus' and argument for these bikes, especially when it comes to the city environment. This is not the biggest advantage though: the SM is very practical and so easy to ride. It remains a 'sport bike' and can squeeze through and around situations. It is small, light, super-agile and goes against this perception people have of 'E vehicles' being heavy and ill-handling. It has a sporty character and people are not used to associating that with electric products. It is a big selling factor for the bike.

Although perhaps it won't be KTM's easiest sell...

Clearly we are not promoting this as 'THE' commuter bike because it is not. It's not comparable to other E or hybrid cars or vehicles that have the main goal of going maximum-clean-maximum-distance. The price factor is an issue at this stage. The bike is not the root of an aggressive sales project. It does need to have a business case however and we need to justify Freeride-E from a financial point of view for the company. These models are part of a learning process and a different business strategy. There might not be many people who go to a dealer with 11k in the pocket and walk out with this bike. There might be people instead who think 'KTM E? I'll go to a park, rent it and have fun'. This must be an option. It is a different commercial approach.

So going electric is still the first part of a voyage for KTM...?

We want to take that sport angle of our bikes and then combine it with the technical side that we have developed with 'E' for different applications and models. Off-road makes sense and so does Street. I think you have to admit that it [electric] will play a role in the motorcycle business in the future. Nobody knows how big or fast this electric scene will move but we are taking the lessons and learning about it. We are selling motorcycles...but we are not checking the figures first thing in the morning and getting nervous. It is normal that there is not a demand and pressure compared to other well-known projects. We have made the investment but we are not throwing big resources and millions and millions at this. We just have to keep telling the story again and again and again about the potential of 'E'.

The Freeride E-SM feels a toy you always saw in the catalogue but knew you'd be lucky to ever have one. It is a luxury but a total pleasure to handle. It also feels like the first major rung on the 'electric' ladder for KTM. The mind can only drift as to how the brand are currently looking to take the Freeride-E concept onwards; it might be a case of an impossibly active manufacturer that refuses to sit still having to wait and bite their fingernails in anticipation of more efficient cell evolution.

Even though the motorcycle market is showing signs of resurgence the Street Freeride-E could be a radical (or difficult) step too far for many. It does however make you wish for more entrepreneurs out there to get inner city bike play parks on the go...what an afternoon out that would be.

KTM FREERIDE E-SM



Guardian



All-over coverage. Modular shirtless design.
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www.atlasbrace.com/atlas-guardian/





Shown: Atlas Guardian - Whiteout

FOX

Fox have given a boost to junior riders (and parents) wishing for better head protection by upgrading their **Youth V3** helmets to embrace the same technology, construction and benefits seen on the adult version of the popular lids. The revised junior V3 therefore includes Fox's Multi-directional Impact Protection System (MIPS), a multiple composite construction of the shell, a dual density EPS liner and dri Lex comfort liner for comfort. Increase performance of the helmet means 11 intake and 4 exhaust vents for optimum airflow. Fox have also provided three cool designs to match the rest of their riding gear (advanced solutions like Flex Air) and standard black for those that fancy a little of their own decoration. Check out the helmets and more of the 2016 range at:

www.foxhead.com/uk







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FEATURE





THE STORIES BEHIND SOME OF THE OUTSTANDING MOMENTS OF
THE 2015 FIM MOTOCROSS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP...

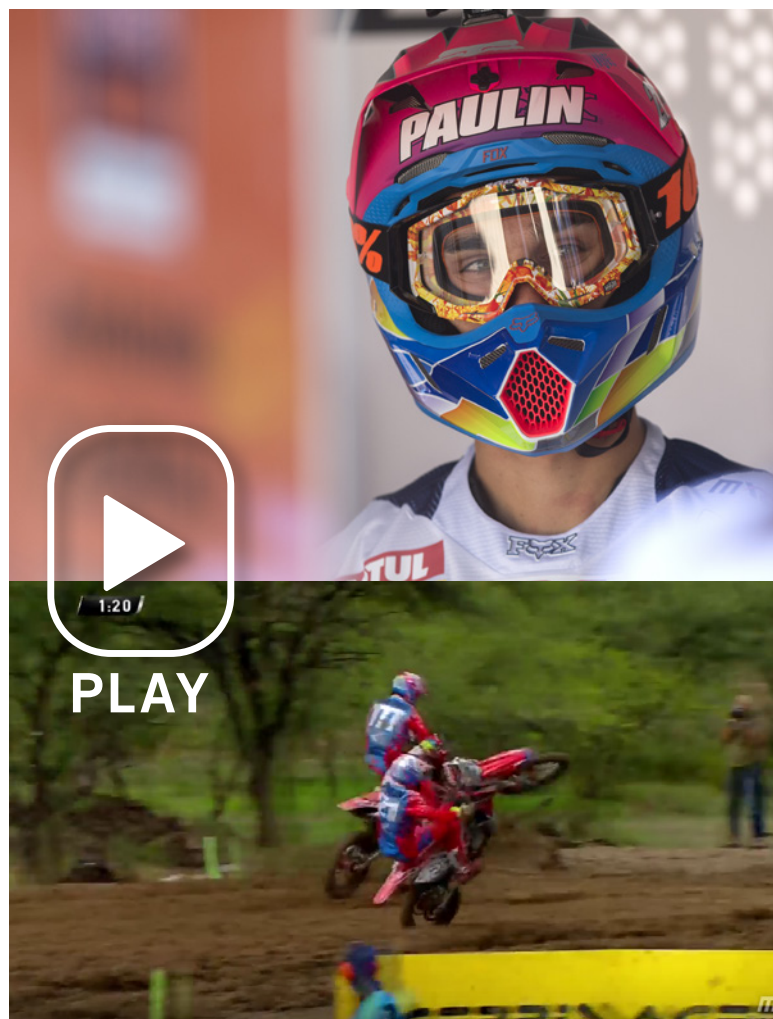
By Adam Wheeler
Photos by Ray Archer
Grabs from mxgp.com &
riders' social media channels

SHOCK! SURPRISE! DISBELIEF!

LOOP OUTS

The role of electronics with factory MXGP 450cc machinery cannot be understated in the current day and age but there is little in the way of traction control that could have prevented the bizarre crashes by Ryan Villopoto (Grand Prix of Trentino, Italy, round four) and Gautier Paulin (Grand Prix of Mexico, round seventeen). The American cited mechanical gremlins for his underwhelming start to life as a Grand Prix rider with a stall out of the gate at Qatar and the launch of the first moto of a season that so many thousands of fans and followers had been waiting for. Villopoto performed better on the jumpy hard-pack and sweltering heat of Thailand (1-3) and was still a protagonist and main star in Argentina. Tackling European soil for the first time and the rippled Arco di Trento was the last that MXGP - and the sport - would see of the multi-champion. Villopoto later described the incident while fighting Clement Desalle for third position in the second moto as a “rookie mistake” and the bump led to a multiple fracture of the coccyx. What followed was a strange period of silence while the American convalesced in the States but also kept firmly under the radar; so much so that even his own team were unsure of his status and possibilities to race. Villopoto crashed on April 19th. On the 24th he was sitting in the Monster Energy Kawasaki race team HQ dealing with questions about a possible u-turn to the AMA Nationals, 2016 and his expected return to action (mooted for the following event in Spain, and then Great Britain and then finally not at all). He announced his retirement on July 9th. As a side note the drama between Villopoto and Desalle in Trentino allowed a certain Romain Febvre to push through and claim just his second top three moto finish on the factory Yamaha...

Honda' Paulin escaped without injury in his dice with team-mate Evgeny Bobryshev for a podium spot across the varying grip of rain-hit Leon. The Frenchman had been struggling with a knee injury since a tumble at the Grand Prix of Czech Republic three rounds previously. '21' poked fun at himself by claiming on his social media channels that he was providing an example of his admiration to RV through the 'off'.



Gautier Paulin @GautierPaulin · Sep 14

I'm a big fan of Ryan Villopoto but i never thought that much..

Je suis un grand fan de Villo, mais je ne...
fb.me/4rp3Z2WTK



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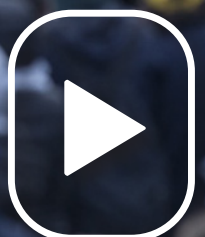
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[View media](#)



MXGP 2015 SURPRISE SPECIAL



PLAY

FEATURE



GAJSER OPENS THE SCORING



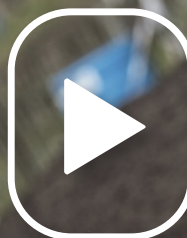
At Alpinestars' 2016 off-road collection presentation some bench racing took place on the potential winners for the Grand Prix of Trentino – only an hour up the road from the prolific motorcycle safety and fashion brand in Asolo. Around a table of eight people predictions were made for the MX2 class and by the end of the judging Tim Gajser's name had not been mentioned. Perhaps the eighteen year old Slovenian's – boisterously cheered by a section of his fan club camped into one section of the Arco di Trento circuit all weekend – ears burned with the lack of a rating. The fourth round of 2015 was eye-catching not only for the HRC Gariboldi rider's excellent speed to defeat Jeffrey Herlings in the second moto (the riders splitting 1-2 scores each) but for the show of solidarity and camaraderie across the finish line. Both Herlings and reigning world champion Jordi Tixier dropped their bikes to help raise the arms of the first-time winner. With hindsight it was like the passing of a mantle. Herlings and Tixier had played their own thrilling game in 2014 but Gajser was now of the speed and maturity to join the party. It was the first of eight podiums including five victories for '243' who would go on to take the title and make history for his country. First however he'd have to go through a few more bumps...

HOLLAND HAVOC

The Grand Prix of Europe in the hard and shallow sand of Valkenswaard south of Eindhoven produced a bevy of incidents and some truly amazing scenes. Once again the MXGP schedule was rammed with the EMX European Championship in what is now a begrudgingly set of circumstances with its own well documented repercussions for track state and preparation. Valkenswaard was the first time in 2015 that real concern over the intensity of the sessions and races were surfacing among the Grand Prix elite. It was a worry that would slowly increase in urgency until reaching a nadir of ill feeling and opinion by Germany and Sweden in the middle of the season. Valkenswaard was the playground of Gautier Paulin for what would be his sole win in HRC colours in 2015 and just the second of three podium finishes in the first half of the term. Such was his superiority on the CRF450RW that many expected '21' to kick-off his first campaign in red from that point but the Frenchman would not uncork rostrum champagne for another five races. "It was tough to be that 'Gautier from Valkenswaard' again," he said at the end of the year and after what was a clear example of being unable to get the Honda set-up to his liking. "We were always making a few changes to try and improve but a little too late compared to the people we were fighting with."

Still in red but in the MX2 class Gajser went flying in spectacular fashion during Saturday's practice (and was extremely lucky not to be seriously hurt) and then went for a swim on Sunday as several riders – rookie Ben Watson included – headed straight into the water feature on the edge of the first turn. An odd location for a pond. The Grand Prix of Europe was notable for being world champion Tony Cairoli's last outing on the all-conquering 350SX-F. The Sicilian felt the power and handling of the 2016 450SX-F would be better suited to face the threats of Max Nagl and

Clement Desalle and partially vindicated his questionable decision by winning the next two rounds in Spain and Great Britain. '22's mind was made up after an accident in Holland that led to a DNF and the end of a five year unbeaten streak at the venue. Want more? How about Dylan Ferrandis being penalised by ten positions for a kick-out at Pauls Jonass in the battle for fourth? The Frenchman was dropped from third to thirteenth. "He [Jonass] looked at me as we were on the straight and then came across and it was dangerous because we were going so fast and I was scared the handlebars would touch," the Argentine GP winner said afterwards. "I don't know why I put my leg out like this - for security...and for sure not to push him. I knew that he was tired and I was faster. I was just scared to crash and we were close together." Incidentally Valkenswaard was the scene of Romain Febvre's worst result of 2015 as he crashed and finished seventh overall. The 23 year old would take his first podium finish in Spain at round six and then would never leave the box for the rest of the season. The least surprising aspect of the weekend was Jeffrey Herlings going 1-1 in MX2 for the seventh year in a row.



PLAY



JONASS TOUCHES THE SKY, TWICE

There were some big crashes in both categories in 2015 and the usual rash of injuries that led to what felt like the longest period of self-reflection inside the paddock. Causes were debated, meetings held and riders' opinions recorded and printed. Reaching the close of 2015 no alterations to how MXGP is set up or run to try and combat this attrition has been made public, aside from the knowledge that the FIM will make chest protection compulsory for 2016. In fact it could even be argued that themes of safety have been wilfully ignored with the riders' wishes to remove the Qualification race on Saturday debunked by adding numerical importance through championship points to the drop of the gate.

MXGP lost star names and presence and even entry list health to medical centres in 2015 but there were also some narrow escapes the most high-profile of which went to the superb Pauls Jonass. I interviewed the Latvian at Qatar and discovered a factory team rookie barely able to contain his smile and exuberance. To see his progression from excited teenager to a seasoned-racer attuned to the pressure and demands of the spotlight and the rough touch of the dirt was for me one of the starkest reminder of how a long championship can affect an individual. Jonass was supremely lucky to walk away with slight concussion after a kicker while running fourth in the second moto in Sweden (he would go on to take podium finishes in the next four Grands Prix) sent him airborne. Attacking the penultimate round in Mexico and recovering to sixth place from last after taking the holeshot with his head on the ground, a similar accident occurred and another hefty slice of fortune. Coach Stefan Everts was bitterly disappointed with Jonass' emphatic charge that led to the crash at Leon but '41' had little choice in his duel with Gajser

that again put the MX2 class at the centre of interest. Jonass would amazingly finish the second moto after pitting for repairs for the second race in a row (he'd also gone down at Assen) but the mental and physical effects of his get-off in Mexico would mean that he had little for Gajser at the season-closer in the USA and KTM lost the MX2 crown for the first time since 2008. Jonass still finished as runner-up in the series and what can be considered a fantastic full-time attempt at Grand Prix...as well as a blessed one.







PRIVATEER SIMPSON SLAYS 'EM AT LOMMEL

A second overall win and the first 1-1 of the Scot's career came at the hardest and most difficult race of the season and through the Lommel sand. In his favour there was no Tony Cairoli to add a threat to Simpson's chances and Gautier Paulin claimed his knee injury was also an impediment. Romain Febvre's supposed weakness in the sand was a falsehood but he did fall while tailing Simpson in the first moto. Riding a 2015 450SX-F and with 'previous' in the sand (victory at Lierop in 2013 was as emotional as it was surprising) Simpson still had some doubts over his head. He had yet to reach the podium that year and his privateer effort with father Willie as mechanic had been running a high gear since February with British Championship and International appearances. The 27 year old is one of the few that genuinely relishes the Belgian Grand Prix and has enough training and testing laps of Lommel to do a lap with a cover on his tear-offs. KTM were watching carefully with their factory team depleted and the sight of '24' regularly launching the immense quad jump was the definition of 'balls out'. Lommel hosted Simpson's first 1-1 but it was also a red letter day for Great Britain with wins in two other classes and Max Anstie making it two in a row in MX2 to validate his sand credentials after Jeffrey Herlings. After the Belgian GP Simpson would shine at Unadilla, get a '16 450SX-F and factory support, win again at Assen and take another podium finish in Mexico. He was one of seven different MXGP victors in 2015 and by virtue of his privateer status takes the gong for one of the most impressive triumphs of the year...just ahead of MXGP rookie Glenn Coldenhoff who's success in Latvia came out of the blue but was no less impressive.



HERLINGS HURTING

Jeffrey Herlings mixed brilliance and bafflement in 2015. He missed the podium (indeed the top two in the overall classification) only once in the first nine rounds and already accrued a points advantage of almost three Grands Prix before he started getting hurt. On the cusp of speculation over his future in MX2 and the pressing need again to step-up to MXGP with a third title imminent, he scrubbed the hill too much in Germany (right) and broke a collarbone at round ten. His confidence was already dented before the crash. That weekend the Dutchman was in a thoughtful mood. He had been the most prolific rider in the world championship paddock the two previous seasons but had been already beaten in 2015 by Tim Gajser and Valentin Guillod and was not feeling his usual sheen of invincibility. The spill at Germany would drag Herlings to new depths.

Freshly operated he returned two weeks later in Sweden but a grisly crash again on the opening lap (second moto this time) slashed the skin open on two fingers of his left hand. He was forced out of Latvia the following week due to the risk of infection in the wound and was then punted out of 2015 and the title chase altogether when Jordi Tixier smashed into his hip in the Czech Republic.

The rate of injuries in such a small space of time ripped a hefty hole in '84's career and even had the rider himself venting emotionally on social media. The twenty year old may have made some wrong decisions at key times but is he is still also one of MXGP's best riders and supreme athletes. After the adversity of the broken femur in 2014, 2015 was not the tonic Herlings was after. Fans of the sport can only wait now to see how 'Herlings 3.0' will emerge in 2016 (and on what bike)...



MXGP 2015 SURPRISE SPECIAL



FEBVRE FLIES IN MAGGIORA

Romain Febvre will freely admit that not a single person would have tipped him for title glory in his rookie term in MXGP. However a first top three moto finish at round two, first podium at round six, first moto win at round seven and then maiden GP win at round eight meant that 461 was quickly moving places. Around the middle of the season the popular opinion in the paddock was that the Frenchman's attacking style and rapidly expanding confidence would soon meet a sticky end. Febvre's campaign did not plummet into the mud as many predicted but a crash did arrive (one of very few throughout 2015 it has to be said).

His dismount in the wet at Maggiora for round nine while fighting for sixth place with Shaun Simpson could have carried much more serious consequences. In fact Febvre displayed new brilliance by remounting with a damaged handlebar (that he said looked worse than it was) and kept riding, even passing David Philippaerts to finish sixth and elongate his podium run to four trophies. The Grand Prix of Italy was the time that Febvre ascended to the role of authentic championship challenger. His ability and staying power contrasting at the same meeting with Tony Cairoli's fractured arm and Clement Desalle's withdraw from the fight with knee and shoulder injuries.



MXGP 2015 SURPRISE SPECIAL



PLAY



ARGENTINA CRAZE

The newly constructed Neuquen circuit – formulated through a sandy, tacky volcanic ash – was one of the best of the season and although Youthstream had primed teams and followers of MXGP by stating that a high percentage of their social media following originates from the bike-racing-mad country, there was still a degree of shock with what the circus found in Villa La Angostura. Fans packed the venue, mobbed the riders and filled up the ski resort town to the point where accommodation was non-existent. In the remote climes of Patagonia MXGP encountered one of its most passionate homes. Ryan Villopoto and Tony Cairoli needed Army escorts to move around the circuit and the American seemed genuinely bemused by the whole experience. Moving Grand Prix to the southern hemisphere is a long and pricey exercise but to find such a reception was deeply encouraging and vindicates some of the promoter's insistence in trying to take the sport into new or 'unbreached' territories. Unsurprisingly Neuquen is on the calendar for 2016.



MXGP 2015 SURPRISE SPECIAL





NO SHO

SANDMONSTER

—
Shaun Simpson
MXGP Winner
UK MX1 Champion 2014 & 2015

▶ SHAUN SIMPSON

ART CUTS

WHAT'S THE POINT(S)?

By Adam Wheeler

At this precise moment in time it is a little hard to focus on motocross with MotoGP so succulently inviting opinion and the off-road world entering a period of hibernation, however there is no escaping the fact that the last major news to emerge from the world of MXGP made for quite a sobering read.

Like most of the reactions I have seen or heard of the new rule stipulating that the 2016 Qualification Heat will now carry points I am also confused by the change. The motivation to install the system is obvious. It emboldens Youthstream's desire to maintain the two day format for Grand Prix and justify further the centrepiece of Saturday's scheduling. The promoters are safeguarding some tradition here and also offering circuits and clubs the best chance to generate revenue across forty-eight hours as opposed to a rushed twenty-four for the largest spectator attendance. It also disperses an intense and frankly exhausting programme of European Championship sessions – both a money spinner for Youthstream (Honda and Yamaha series anyone?) and what is also a very fine pyramid racing structure (in their defence).

However there has been dismay from the riders I have spoken with. One confided that in a meeting with Youthstream at the Grand Prix of Latvia a request to remove the Qualification race from the timetable was submitted, and Tony Cairoli was unusually outspoken against the regulation switch in an interview with Brazilian website www.brmx.com.br last week.

In the eyes of the riders and many others there are two large crosses in the 'against' column for this idea. The first is over safety – and is an area in which the FIM could have made a strong showing to try and reverse some of the crashes, accidents and injuries that littered the drawn-out 2015 campaign. With nineteen Grands Prix on the 2016 calendar the longest season on record just stretched a little further and MXGP is now able to top MotoGP in one aspect. With thirty eight motos and another nineteen qualification heats then this means riders in just one class will be looking at a mammoth fifty-seven starts next year... and every gatedrop carries an element of risk. Understandably there is concern. And a feeling of effrontery with the riders' thoughts and feeling being passed over.

The second inexplicable aspect of qualification points is the convolution of the results. It was only three years ago that the powers-that-be were seriously considering an overhaul of Grand Prix to involve a one moto format for television, having – quite rightly – identified that motocross carries its own large handicap for expansion through the need for broadcast of four races and a point system that combines classifications. It is hard to make MXGP a one-shot deal for the casual arm-chair viewer. It was seen as a move too radical and with bitter memories of Dorna's rigid single race experiment from 2001-2003 the scheme faded away (I still think a new version could have worked with championship points awarded for a first race and the 'Grand Prix' being decided on a longer single race for TV cameras). MXGP has a wide and cosmopolitan catchment of TV agreements but aside from a very decent magazine show cannot offer a viewer friendly package to



broadcasters. I feel this might be a missed opportunity. I'm not expert on the behind-the-scenes dealings of TV networks but with sports like MotoGP and F1 eating themselves with subscription only contracts there is perhaps more room than ever for motocross to squeeze a quality spot of programming into semi-prominent terrestrial schedules and channels. While a comprehensible understanding of a motocross Grand Prix currently involves at least two hours of a show then this is a restriction. In 2016 viewers will need to fine tune their mathematics even further to contemplate points from an extra race in the same weekend – and one that even the dedicated TV fan is unlikely to have seen. As one factory rider commented to me last week “we were supposed to be making the sport simpler for new fans at one point. It seems that now we are to assume everyone has become super-smart!”

There is still time for Youthstream to push to reverse and I'm curious as to the feedback they have received since the FIM published the press release on the alterations of their rulebook. I'm also interested to know if the teams and manufacturers supported such a decision, knowing the connotations after their last meeting after the Motocross of Nations. Many good moves for the benefit of motocross have been made in the last half a decade and this one feels like a step-back.



D

PRODUCTS





Not a product...but famed promoter Eric Peronnard recently dropped news of his Junior MX Indoor event that'll be something that many people will 'want to get their hands on'.

Set to run from May 12 -14, 2016 at the Lazy E Arena in Guthrie, Oklahoma City, the meeting is open to riders up to the age of eighteen with a maximum of two classes per racer and 600 entries in total. Subscriptions are not open yet but the organiser's mission statement goes something like: 'To provide Supercross style experience to young racers and provide them with the opportunity to grow and learn about the most visible form of off road racing. A safe, fun and challenging track featuring some of the best dirt on earth. An event that will demonstrate respect for industry partners and the racing families. This will be a weekend filled with great racing, education and relationship building at a world class location with easy access from around the United States.'

Peronnard is renowned for his role in creation of the U.S Open, organisation at Paris-Bercy Supercross, Extreme Enduro, Geneva Supercross, Red Bull Straight Rhythm and more. We threw a few questions at him about the latest brainchild...

JUNIOR MOTOX

How do you see kids and families embracing this event? Will be it a 'Loretta's of Supercross' or received in a similar way do you feel?

The goal is to create a high quality event with a supercross style flavour. The two key words are JUNIOR and INDOOR! Loretta is the reference and will be for many years. We just want it create a premium experience on all levels.

Track preparation will be key for such a large scope of this event. Any other important aspects that you feel have to be '100%'?

Absolutely, we will have renowned builders on site to build and maintain track at all times. Gerry Masterpool will lead the safety aspect of the track. We will also have the Asterisk medical rig that is present at all Supercross races present.

After establishment do you feel this is something that has legs for a potential series or will always work best as a mega annual 'standalone'?

Standalone is our goal since the timing and mapping of location was strategically decided.....There is only one geographic centre of America.....this where we are!

LAST GROWL OF THE YEAR...

By Steve Matthes

The Monster Energy Cup is different. And it's that way by design as the last thing the guys at the green claw company want is an eighteenth Monster Energy Supercross. This was their directive to the folks at Feld Motorsports and they've delivered a race that's unique, that's interesting and it definitely won't be mistaken for a normal SX.

After all, just the inclusion of amateur all-stars on 250F's and Super-Mini classes ensure that this isn't Anaheim stadium. However that still doesn't stop some of these supercross novices from acting like it is to everyone's great entertainment. The Joker Lane innovation is something that is pretty entertaining; a rider has to take it one time per main event. This seems pretty simple right? Well, apparently not because we've seen more than a few riders forget about this one detail!. And that folks, makes the Joker Lane even more fun!

There's no doubt that Feld Motorsports is taking a look at some of the innovations at the ME Cup as well as what they've done with the arenacross series (two main events, chase-style points fund, reverse gate picks for second main among others) and are going to implement them into the 17 round supercross series and I, for one, can't wait.

Whether it's traditional stick and ball sports or even more appropriately other motorsports, one thing they've had in common is change. As in, they alter some things to see if they can make their sport more entertaining. In 2015, it's not all about the purity of the game/race. It's about making someone who's got 400 other channels to look at stay on the channel

that your sport is on. And supercross, especially since the introduction of four-strokes that are really more powerful and capable than the stadium floors have room for, has been a bit stagnant over the years.

The stars advance out of the heat races, it's 25 points for a win, 22 for second, etc, etc, the main events are 20 laps and so on. Nothing new has been done in supercross as far as scoring/length of the main events for 40 years outside of 1985 where there were two 12-lap main events. It's time to change up the points structure, main events, perhaps the number of times the fans see the stars and so on. And if these changes don't work, you can always change it back to the way it was right? If you're not trying to think about different ways to entertain your fans/viewers than you're just staying the same. The MEC is a glimpse of what might be, that's why it's a cool event every year.

Let's take a look at some noteworthy news items from the race:

-Kenny Roczen had a rough 2015 as the German saw his meteoric rise to stardom suffer some adversity for the first time in his career. A new team, a couple of injuries, some sub-standard rides and a dad that gave us all a look at things inside said new team (although biased as dads tend to be) all equaled to a big 2016 year for Roczen. His deal with RCH is up and we'll see if Roczen wants to carry on down this path.

Although the MEC means nothing in the grand scheme of momentum for Anaheim 1, 2016,



Roczen answered a lot of questions with 1-4-1 rides in Vegas to win the MEC. Good starts, great speed all equaled up to Roczen dominating the cup. Roczen showed up at the race without the usual Showa suspension on as he switched to Kayaba air forks and regular shock. And like Trey Canard a couple years ago when he went from Showa to KYB, the results were dramatic and immediate. And from what I gather from talking to some people, there were a lot of politics and emails to allow Roczen to make the switch to a suspension brand that doesn't come on the production Suzuki's.

"It's personal preference and I liked it a lot better," said Roczen on the move. "We just put something on that worked pretty decent. Obviously we've got a lot more testing ahead of us to get things ready for Anaheim. That's pretty much it."

"All that fighting and all the headache (to get the suspension on his bike) is worth it. I need to be selfish because I want to win. I don't really care about any of the contract stuff, any of that. I know it's hard for the team but we want to win and I know the guys behind me want to win too. So I want what's best for being up at the very top."

-For the fourth time, Ryan Dungey finished second at the Monster Energy Cup and although he wasn't as sharp as he normally is, was still plenty fast enough out there. Remember what we said above about the Joker Lane and riders missing it? Yeah, that was Jason Anderson this year. He forgot in the first main event and it allowed him to win the main. Of course right after Roczen rode up to him and pointed

that fact out to him which made for plenty of laughs yet again.

Despite that gaffe, Anderson looked great out there in finishing third overall. He's got the new KTM Race Replica this year (Husky's are KTM's after all despite what the men in white want to tell you) and we saw what that bike did for Dungey in 2015. It's a vast improvement over the older model that Anderson rode last year and so if you're looking for a sleeper in 2016, look for the New Mexico kid with the jersey hanging out of his pants.

-James Stewart is back! The Yoshimura Suzuki rider's year long suspension for an illegal stimulant is over and he lined up for his first race since the summer of 2014 and all of us covering the sport were pretty excited. After all, it's James Stewart right? Well, it didn't quite work out as Stewart posted the sixth best qualifying time, got a bad start in the first main, fell on the first lap and pulled out of the race with a sore wrist. Just like it's tough for Roczen to carry his result into Anaheim 1, Stewart's poor showing here doesn't really matter all that much. But it was a let-down...sort of like the new Star Wars a few years ago, there was a lot of hype but we were left with more questions after it was over.

SBK

PIRELLI QATAR ROUND

LOSAIL · OCTOBER 18th · Rnd 13 of 13

Race one winner: Jordi Torres, Aprilia

Race two winner: Leon Haslam, Aprilia



ITALIAN SIGN-OFF



LIGHTS GO OFF FOR 2015 AND VERY MUCH ANOTHER GREEN YEAR IN WORLD SUPERBIKE. THE APRILIAS RAN OUT WINNERS AT LOSAIL WITH JORDI TORRES BECOMING THE FIRST NON-BRITISH RACE VICTOR THIS SEASON AND AT THE 25TH RACE OF 26! CHAZ DAVIES MADE SURE OF A WELL-EARNED NO.2 PLATE

Blog by Graeme Brown
Photos by Aprilia/Ducati Corse Press

FADE TO BLACK?

By Graeme Brown



Well there we go. That fat lady has sung. All that is left to do in the 2015 FIM Superbike Championship is hand out the silverware. The atmosphere for the final race under the floodlights in Qatar was inevitably a bit flat. At times there was more interest in the press office over the Rugby World Cup and the MotoGP race in Australia than there was in what was going on downstairs. I wished I had brought my Kerplunk and Buckaroo for the last day at school. (that tells you how old I am!)

The final races of the WSBK season were a bit of a surprise. It looked like four days of testing with Max Biaggi at Losail in the immediate run up to the race paid dividends for Aprilia. Both Torres and Haslam taking a win each with the final race providing a bit of a ding-dong battle between Haslam and Davies, as Sykes looked on from close quarters looking to mop up any spillages.

This season's champions, Jonathan Rea and Kawasaki have been absolutely imperious and the sight of the lead pack coming round the track with Rea missing felt like a major drama. The technical problem that meant he had to pull in was the very first his side of the garage had had all season, even in testing and whilst it had no consequence on the championship it left Rea 5 points short of the all-time record for one WSBK season. He was quite sanguine however saying that it would have been really nice to get that record but 14 race wins and a world championship was pretty special.

Looking to next year the massed ranks of the press corps were sharing notes over what deals had still to be done and what the 2016 calendar would be like. Little snippets of dates for races were being traded like Chinese whispers and I was acting on every one I heard. As a stereotypical canny Scotsman if I can save thrupence on a hotel bill I will. The delight of Booking.com is that

most reservations can be cancelled at no charge, so as it stands I am heading to Thailand three weekends on the trot. I really must remember that come March!

On the teams front the biggest speculation was over the final intentions of Shaun Muir Racing and the Milwaukee Yamaha team. It wouldn't normally have registered amongst the foreign media but Josh Brookes' victory in the British Superbike Championship also became a talking point. However, the chatterings ranged from SMR running Yamahas in BSB or WSBK, Suzukis in BSB or WSBK, Aprilias in WSBK, but they may also run BMWs. Why can't some people just say: "I don't know"

As I packed up in Qatar and got ready to head to the airport I read the news that MV Agusta will team up with Forward Racing to work towards improving the World Supersport and World SBK programmes with the intention of progressing to MotoGP. According to WorldSBK.com they will have none other than the 'exceptional test rider' Marco Melandri working on the project. It will be interesting to see if Marco knows he has been demoted as I am sure he still reckons he is an exceptional racer. I was discussing on e-mail with one journalist about it and he summed it up perfectly "sounds like an idea with no plan". I thought it was a long shot but I wouldn't be surprised however if we now see him on the grid in Australia in February.

The next few weeks are crammed full of testing and it will only be a few days before I am on my travels again to Motorland Aragon on 27-29 October. Kawasaki will get their hands on the new 2016 ZX-10R, Crescent will get a chance to run their new Yamaha's at Jerez on 2-4 November and Nicky Hayden will get to grips with his new Honda at Motorland Aragon on 16-17 November. I am sure if Shaun Muir Racing will be in there as well.



BELSTAFF

Luxury can often equate with quality. As we don't own a Belstaff jacket we'll just have to take this maxim at its word, but the British brand (only nine years away from a centennial) boasts a heritage with motorcycling, speed and renowned figures and personalities. Their latest collection also has no shortage of choice when it comes to style and cut. Here are just a few we hand-picked. Belstaff also have shoe, knit and accessory lines if your Visa has some slack.

Jackets form the centre of their wares and the **Marshfield** has that enduro and worn look not dissimilar to something you'd find in Barbour's racks while the **Haycroft** is nearly double the price at almost 1200 euros but is 'crafted in waxed cotton for increased wearability. It has popper-fastening front pockets and a belted waistband lend necessary functionality.'

The **Weybridge** is your typical riding jacket and might just serve in the final stages of autumn weather; it comes in at 550 euros while the **Sanders** jacket hits at 1450 euros but is made of leather and with that café racer vibe.

www.belstaff.eu/home



Haycroft



Marshfield



Weybridge



Sanders



SCARY

DUCATI TURN UP THE PRESSURE IN THE 'NAKED' SEGMENT WITH THE MONSTER 1200R; THE BIKE THAT MANY OF THE ITALIANS' FANS HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR. ROLAND CASTS HIS VERDICT

By Roland Brown, Photos by Milagro



DUCATI MONSTER 1200R



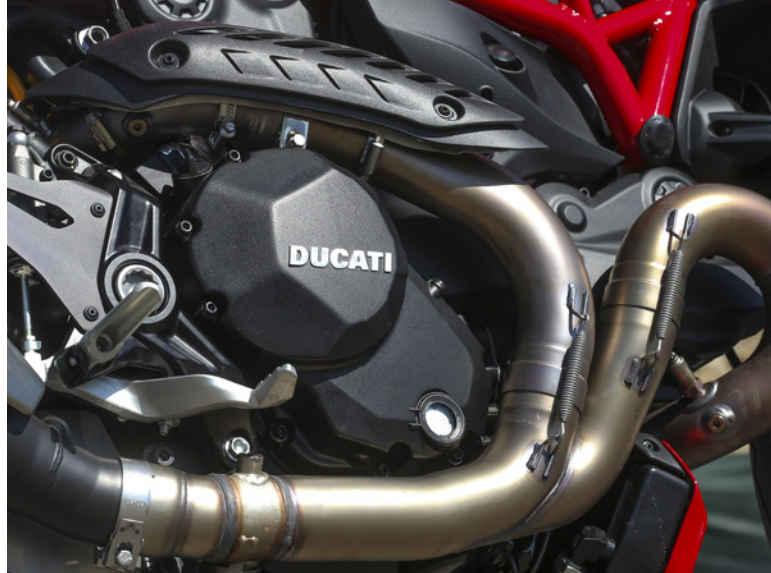
TEST

If ever there's a bike to fill an obvious gap in a manufacturer's range, it's Ducati's Monster 1200R. The Italian marque is known for performance above all, so when it revamped its famous Monster family of unfaired V-twins two years ago the lack of a truly speed-focused model seemed slightly strange.

Not that the Monster 1200S that headed the new range wasn't quick, sweet-handling and very capable. But with a maximum output of 145bhp and an unashamed preference for the road rather than the track it was a subtly different type of bike to the 160bhp-plus Aprilia Tuono, BMW S1000R and KTM 1290 Super Duke R whose bare-chested brawl led to 2014 being regarded as the "year of the super-naked".

Two years on, it's no surprise to see the Monster range extended with a bike whose priority is performance. With a claimed peak output of 160bhp and dry weight of 180kg, this sportiest yet member of Ducati's famous fairingless family is 15bhp more powerful and two kilos lighter than the 1200S. It's also designed to work as well on track as on the road; hence the launch venue of the spectacular Ascari circuit in southern Spain, whose occasional wall-lined bends give the feel of being midway between a good road and a conventional racetrack.

Ducati didn't need to "tune" the Monster motor because they already had a very suitable version of their 1198cc, eight-valve V-twin in the Diavel power-cruiser's Testastretta 11° V-twin unit, which produces 162bhp. The Monster's fuel-injection system is different but engine changes are largely limited to low-friction pistons and a new clutch cover to reduce mechanical noise. Along with a new exhaust system, this helps the 1200R become the first Monster to get through Euro 4 emissions tests.



DUCATI MONSTER 1200R





A close-up, low-angle shot of a motorcycle rider leaning into a turn on a racetrack. The rider is wearing a black and white Dainese racing suit, a black Shark helmet with red and green accents, and white gloves with black detailing. The motorcycle is red with black accents. The background is a blurred racetrack and grassy area, suggesting high speed.

DUCATI MONSTER 1200R

**"THE 1200R IS THE FASTEST, MOST AGGRESSIVE
AND ENTERTAINING MONSTER YET ..."**

The R-model's look and feel closely resemble those of the 1200S, but with a few key differences. Its new, more compact tailpiece, which bolts to a redesigned rear subframe, holds a seat that is a substantially higher, at 830mm. That's because the Öhlins forks and diagonally mounted shock are longer, to increase ground clearance.

That will be noticeable to shorter riders, in particular, who'll have to stretch at times, though the Ducati is light and slim enough that few will have a problem. The neatly machined new footrests' separate pillion brackets give extra boot-room and answer a common criticism of the previous Monsters. Shame the 1200R motor fired up with a V-twin sound that was loud enough to be interesting, but couldn't match the other Monsters' throaty bark.

At least the R-bike made up for that with extra bite, mainly at the top end where it pulled with distinctly more enthusiasm than the 1200S. There was strong torque available from 6000rpm, enough to send the Ducati storming out of the Ascari turns. On the straights it was a case of gripping the wide bars and trying to duck behind the low screen as the bike stormed towards its top speed of about 160mph.

The six-speed box worked smoothly but surprisingly even this top-of-the-range Monster has no quick-shifter, let alone one that allows both up- and down-changes, like that of the 1299 Panigale. Ducati say they couldn't develop one that worked well enough on both road and track: a bizarre admission from such a proudly engineering-led firm. There's also no Multistrada 1200 style DVT variable-valve technology, which would have added expense plus 5kg of weight.

Apart from the longer suspension units, the main chassis differences are the addition of an adjustable Öhlins steering damper, plus forged Marchesini wheels wearing stickier Pirelli Supercorsa SP rubber, the rear a fatter 200-section radial. All were of value at Ascari, where those wheels doubtless contributed, along with slightly sportier steering geometry, to the 1200R's wonderfully flickable feel.





DUCATI MONSTER 1200R

Its extra ground clearance was also useful although surprisingly the bike still dragged solid parts in a few of Ascari's cambered turns.

Unlike Ducati's 1299 Panigale the R-bike doesn't get semi-active suspension or cornering ABS. It seemed harsh to complain about the latter because the Monster combines its powerful blend of Brembo 330mm discs and radial M50 Monobloc calipers with a conventional Bosch anti-lock system that worked superbly even on track.

And this raciest Monster should prove respectably practical on road too, despite that higher seat. Its mirrors stayed pretty clear; the digital display was attractive and informative; the unchanged 17.5-litre tank should be good for close to 150 miles; and the seat, which incorporates pillion hand-holds, seemed comfortable enough to cope with a similar distance.

Ultimately I'd guess that one or two of the Ducati's more powerful rivals would lap a track slightly quicker, and that one of its less expensive Monster siblings (it costs roughly 15 per cent more than the Monster S, at £15,250 in the UK) would suit most riders better on the road. But the 1200R is the fastest, most aggressive and entertaining Monster yet, and gives Ducati a genuine super-naked contender at last.



ROSSI & LORENZO

MotoGP was the talk of the motorcycling community last weekend with events in Malaysia and is now set for a tense showdown at Valencia that will again push the competition to the forefront of attention. The Ricardo Tormo is a strange stadium setting that permits generous views but also a hefty distance from the track. If by chance Rossi or Lorenzo fans felt compelled to attend and lend their voice to the cause for the Italian (starting at the back of the grid and with only two podium finishes in the past five years and a last win in 2004!) or the Spaniard (seven points adrift and a winner in 2013) then a wide choice of official merchandise is on offer.

As you'd expect Rossi's collection is comprehensive and ranges from the Moto3 VR46 team to a fashion-orientated (not day-glow yellow), Yamaha-tinged-wear and Monster gear. Lorenzo focuses more on the '99' and 'Por Fuera' logo but the black tees and outerwear looks pretty smart in Yamaha related black. Neither collection is particularly cheap but a quick walk around most circuit's commercial areas will reveal a roaring trade in this kind of livery and apparel.

http://www.vr46.it/gb_en/

www.gpracingapparels.com/en/motogp/jorge-lorenzo/







BACKPAGE

Monster Energy Girls
By Monster Energy







'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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Thanks to www.mototribu.com

PHOTO CREDITS

Ray Archer, Monster Energy, Milagro, Repsol Honda, Andrew Northcott, Ducati, Simon Cudby

Cover shot: Dani Pedrosa in Sepang by Repsol Honda

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